tristis and *A. fuscus* which are successfully established on some islands, and the Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* established only on Taveuni.

The collection of the Whitney Expedition certainly forms the basis of our present knowledge of the inter-island distribution of birds in Fiji, but as already mentioned, the expedition did not collect every species it encountered on each island. Those birds seen but not collected were noted in Beck's and Correia's Journals for some islands, but many islands have no such list. The entries appear to be haphazard and the identity of certain birds is difficult because of the use of peculiar English names. One inevitably suspects the comprehensiveness of these observations and consequently the use of the Whitney records as the definitive list of the avifauna of Fiji islands in the 1920's.

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to the Director of Agriculture, Fiji Government for permission to visit Makogai and to Ian and Maria Partridge for their hospitality whilst on the island. Fergus Clunie kindly commented on a draft of this note and provided all the information on the birds of Wakaya Island. The help of Mary LeCroy at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and the late Mr. C. W. Benson at the Cambridge University Zoology Museum is much appreciated.

References:

Beckon, W. N. 1980. Gizzard structure of the Pacific Pigeon *Ducula pacifica*. *Notornis* 27: 302–303.

Brown, B. & Child, P. 1975. Notes on a field trip to Fiji. *Notornis* 22: 10–22.

Collins, C. T. & Brooke, R. K. 1976. A review of the swifts of the genus *Hirundapus* (Aves: Apodidae). *Contrib. No.* 282; *Nat. Hist. Mus. Los Angeles.*

du Pont, J. E. 1976. *South Pacific Birds.* Del. Mus. Nat. Hist., Monograph No. 3.

Holyoak, D. T. & Thibault, J. C. 1978. Notes on the phylogeny, distribution and ecology of the frugivorous pigeons in Polynesia. *Emu* 78: 201–206.

Mercer, R. 1964. *A Guide to Fiji Birds.* Fiji Museum: Suva.

Pernetta, J. C. & Watling, D. 1978. The native and introduced terrestrial vertebrates of the Fiji Islands. *Pac. Sci.* 32: 223–244.

Ramsay, E. P. 1875. Remarks on a collection of birds lately received from Fiji, and now forming part of the Macleayan Collection, at Elizabeth Bay; with a list of all species at present known to inhabit the Fiji Islands. *Proc. Linn. Soc. NSW.* 1: 69–80.

Turbet, C. R. 1929. The Sheep Industry in Fiji. *Fiji J. Agric.* 2 (1): 1–11.

Watling, D. 1978a. A collection of Fijian and Tongan landbirds. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club.* 98 (3): 95–98.

— 1978b. Observations on the naturalised distribution of the Red-vented Bulbul in the Pacific, with special reference to the Fiji Islands. *Notornis* 25: 109–117.

— 1982. *The Birds of Fiji, Tonga and Samao.* Millwood Press: Wellington, New Zealand.

Address: Dick Watling, Box 9216, Nadi Airport P.O., Fiji.

© British Ornithologists' Club 1982.

Taxonomic status of the Timor Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina personata* (Müller)

by Ian J. Mason & John L. McKean

Received 9 March 1982

All modern arrangements (Ripley 1941, Mayr 1944, Voous & van Marle 1949, Peters *et al.* 1960) place *Coracina personata* (Müller) as a race of *C. novaehollandiae* (Gmelin). During field work in Timor (McKean *et al.* 1975) we had the opportunity of observing and collecting *personata* and formed the opinion that the bird was not a race of *novaehollandiae*. Museum material of most of the likely related forms confirmed this and we concluded that, at present, *personata* is best treated as a full species.

A comparison of *C. novaehollandiae* and *C. personata*

Our studies embraced all seasons during 1973–74 and revealed that *personata* frequented rain forests and monsoon scrub, avoiding open areas and eucalypt woodland. *C. novaehollandiae,* on the other hand, preferred eucalypt woodland as it does in Australia. However, the Australian forms of *novaehollandiae,* namely *novaehollandiae, melanotis* (=*melanops*) and *subpallida* (Schodde in prep.), as befits their more arid environment, have pale plumage and are nomadic or migratory, the latter 2 forms dispersing to northern Australia and the Lesser Sunda Islands, eastward to the Solomon Islands (Ripley 1941, Peters *et al.* 1960). These forms of *novaehollandiae* are comparatively rare in Timor (as well as the rest of the Lesser Sundas), occurring only as non-breeding (winter) migrants between April and November (cf. Hartert 1904, Hellmayr 1914, Mayr 1944, Mees 1975) – the possibility of *novaehollandiae* and *personata* being sibling species is therefore excluded. On the other hand, evidence suggests that *C. personata* is a sedentary breeding species throughout its range, although it may undertake local movements. Probably in response to its rainforest environment and sedentary habit, it has evolved a dark plumage, more rounded wings (primaries formula: $4 \simeq 5$, $5/4 > 3$, $3 > 6$, $2 > 7$) and, compared to *novaehollandiae,* has longer denser facial bristles.

Sexual dimorphism is pronounced in *personata* (♂♂: black extends from forehead through eye to ear coverts and throat; ♀♀: black is reduced to forehead through eye), but is hardly apparent in either Asian or Australian forms of *novaehollandiae.*

C. personata has, proportionally, a much shorter wing (5 ♂♂, ♀♀: 164–174mm, wing/tail ratio 1:23) than *C. novaehollandiae* (10 ♂♂, ♀♀: 185–202mm; wing/tail ratio 1:39). Other plumage characters separating the two include *personata*'s darker more uniform plumage, the black (not white) edging to its underwing coverts, grey rather than white vent and undertail coverts and a black rather than slate grey tail, which is narrowly tipped cream.

The calls of *C. personata* are a series of long monosyllabic piping whistles and are strikingly different from those of *novaehollandiae,* which could best be described as a rolling 'churr' and a more flutey 'keeair-keeair' given in flight. However, it should be mentioned that our field experience of *novaehollandiae* only extends to the Australasian forms and the race *javensis* in Bali. Ali & Ripley (1971) describe the call of *macei,* the Indian race of *novaehollandiae,* as a long bisyllabic whistle 'tee-tree' which seems equivalent to our flight call 'keeair'.

CONCLUSIONS

For the reasons outlined above we feel that *C. personata* ought not to be considered a race of *C. novaehollandiae* and, pending a further revision of this genus, it is best treated as a full species. Its affinities may be with *C. larvata,* which is also rather dark in plumage, exhibits sexual dimorphism (♂♂: black head and throat; ♀♀: crown and throat grey) and is said to emit a long whistling call (cf. Smythies 1960: 359). Voous & van Marle (1949), as well, have commented on the similarities between *personata* and *larvata.* From their and Ripley's (1941) discussions, in context with Mathews' (1930) original taxonomic arrangement, it can be deduced that the 3 species *C. personata, schistacea* and *pollens* are probably more closely related than previously thought, in that they have in common a dark slate-grey plumage, large size and robust bills. R. Schodde (pers. comm. and in prep.), in revising the Australian species of *Coracina* for the RAOU 'Checklist of the Birds of Australia', has

concluded independently that the affinities of *personata* may lie with *schistacea*, *pollens* or *larvata* rather than *novaehollandiae*.

Acknowledgements: We acknowledge Dr. R. Schodde's communications to us on this subject.

References:

Ali, S. & Ripley, S. D. 1971. *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*. Vol. 6 Oxford University Press; Bombay.

Hartert, E. 1904. The birds of the South-West Islands Wetter, Roma, Kisser, Letti and Moa. *Novit. Zool.* 11: 174–221.

Hellmayr, C. E. 1914. De Avifauna von Timor. *In* C. B. Haniel (Ed.), *Zoologie von Timor*. 1: 1–112.

Mathews, G. M. 1930. *Systema Avium Australasianarum*. 2: 427–1047.

Mayr, E. 1944. The Birds of Timor and Sumba. *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 83: 123–194.

McKean, J. L. ,Mason, I. J. & O'Connor, L. W. 1975. Birds not previously recorded from Timor. *Emu* 75: 62–64.

Mees, G. F. 1975. A list of the birds known from Roti and adjacent islets (Lesser Sunda islands). *Zool. Meded.* 49: 115–139.

Peters, J. L., Mayr, E. & Deignan, H. G. 1960. Family Campephagidae (*Coracina*). In *Check-list of Birds of the World*. Vol. 9: 167–221. (Eds. E. Mayr & C. Greenway) Mus. Comp. Zool: Cambridge, Mass.

Ripley, S. E. 1941. Notes on the genus *Coracina*. *Auk*. 58: 381–395.

Schodde, R. (in prep.) *Campephagidae*. In RAOU *Checklist of the Birds of Australia*. Song-birds.

Smythies, B. E. 1960. *The Birds of Borneo*. Oliver and Boyd: London.

Voous, K. H. & van Marle, J. G. 1949. The distributional history of *Coracina* in the Indo-Australian Archipelago. *Bijdr. Dierk.* 28: 513–529.

Addresses: Mason, Ian J., 20 Magnolia Street, Atherton, Qld., 4883, Australia. McKean, John L., Wildlife Research Section, Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory, P.O. Box 38496, Winnellie, N.T., 5789, Australia.

© British Ornithologists' Club 1982.

Natal pterylosis of three Neotropical blackbirds (Icteridae)

by Charles T. Collins and Dennis Minsky

Received 24 March 1982

The natal pterylosis of Neotropical passerine birds has been given increased attention in recent years (Collins 1963, 1973, Collins & Kemp 1976, Collins & Bender 1977a, Ingels 1979). However information is still lacking on many groups, making broad generalizations largely premature. As further data become available, one question which can be addressed is whether or not tropical passerines have a greater or lesser total number of neossoptiles than their temperate zone counterparts. The data presented here on 3 Neotropical blackbirds in the family Icteridae, all of which have Nearctic congeners, permit at least a preliminary comparison to be made.

The species available for this study were the Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*, Carib Grackle *Quiscalus lugubris* and the Yellow-hooded Blackbird *Agelaius icterocephalus*. The single grackle specimen (late Stage A, see Wetherbee 1957: 356) was collected near Arima, St. George County, Trinidad on 13 June 1963. Two specimens (Stage A) of the Yellow-hooded Blackbird and, in the same nest, one cowbird brood parasite were collected near Cacandee Village, Caroni County, Trinidad on 17 August 1964. Two additional cowbirds were collected in Venezuela; one (late Stage A, 3 days old) from a nest of the Pale-breasted Thrush *Turdus leucomelas* in Parque Nacional Henri Pittier, Estado Aragua, on 2 June 1972, the other (Stage A)